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# Program notes for the Graduate Degree recital of Natalie Stephens

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PROGRAM NOTES FOR THE GRADUATE DEGREE RECITAL OF  
NATALIE STEPHENS

by

Natalie Stephens

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Elon University, 2008

A Research Document  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Music Degree.

School of Music  
in the Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
May 2011

RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

PROGRAM NOTES FOR THE GRADUATE DEGREE RECITAL  
OF NATALIE STEPHENS

By

Natalie Stephens

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Music

in the field of Vocal Performance

Approved by:

Dr. Jeanine Wagner, Chair

Dr. Paul Transue

Professor Timothy Fink

Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH DOCUMENT OF

NATALIE STEPHENS, for the Master of Music degree in VOCAL PERFORMANCE,  
presented on MARCH 11, 2011, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: PROGRAM NOTES FOR THE GRADUATE DEGREE RECITAL OF  
NATALIE STEPHENS

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Jeanine Wagner

This document, in fulfillment of the degree requirements for the Masters of Music in Vocal Performance, seeks to explore the historical, contextual, and analytical aspects of all musical pieces to be performed in a Graduate Degree Recital on April 2, 2011. The art songs, one set by the Romantic composer Hugo Wolf and the other by 20th century composer Jean Berger, are settings of Medieval poetry from the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. The arias chosen span Mozart and the Classical era, Donizetti and the *bel canto* style of the Romantic era, and 20th century opera by Menotti. The final pieces are 21st century “crossover” songs from *The Light in the Piazza* by Adam Guettel. For the purposes of this document, all analyses also include brief composer biographies and translations where required.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are so many people that have contributed to the education that led to this document, which accompanies my graduate recital. For artistic and academic inspiration, I first owe my graduate committee my utmost thanks: Dr Jeanine Wagner, Dr Paul Transue, and Timothy Fink. These three professors have been my mentors, my pillars of strength, and my sounding board for the last two years. For spiritual support, I must thank Dr Robert Weiss and the choir and congregation at First United Methodist Church in Carbondale, Illinois for all the unwavering encouragement and love they have given me. I also give my deepest gratitude to my family, without whose patience and understanding I would never have survived my Masters degree. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I thank the love of my life, Tim Pitchford, for all he is and continues to be.

## PREFACE

This document is written in support of a graduate degree recital that is to take place on April 2, 2011, at First United Methodist Church in Carbondale, Illinois. The recital is in fulfillment of the Masters of Music in Vocal Performance degree at the Southern Illinois University Carbondale School of Music.

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## CHAPTER 1

Gaetano Donizetti  
1797-1848

“Quel guardo il cavaliere...so anch’io la virtù magica”  
from *Don Pasquale* (1843)

Born quite poor in a windowless cellar in Bergamo, Italy, Gaetano Donizetti rose above his ranks to become one of the most internationally successful and prolific composers of the Romantic era. (His brother, Giuseppe, was equally fortunate, becoming the Instructor General of the Imperial Ottoman Court in 1828.) Donizetti began studying piano and singing at the age of nine, but a “throat defect” prevented continued studies in voice. His other musical skills, however, including composition, progressed quickly. His mentor, Simon Mayr, provided him with opportunities for advancement which led to professional engagements and even his first commissioned work in 1818. The opera was called *Enrico di Borgogna* and premiered at the Teatro di San Luca in Venice. The opera gained enough attention to promote a second commission as well as time and resources to compose in other forms including sacred music and string quartets. Subsequent commissions in Rome brought Donizetti to his future wife, as well as a move to Naples where he would settle for many years. Donizetti did not find true fame until his thirty-first opera, *Anna Bolena*, premiered alongside Bellini’s renowned *La Sonnambula*. The opera’s immediate success led to performances to Paris and London, and rose the composer to international fame. The 1830s and 1840s were a whirlwind of composition in which Donizetti produced over fifty operas, including *L’elisir d’Amor* (1832), *Lucrezia Borgia* (1833), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835), *La Fille du Regiment* (1840), and *Don*



*Pasquale* (1843). Donizetti, like so many of his colleagues, contracted syphilis and as a result suffered mental insanity. He died in 1848.<sup>1</sup>

Donizetti set the scene for Italian Romantic opera, greatly influencing Verdi and other composers such as Bellini. Donizetti's operas fell into the end of the bel canto genre of opera, a "manner of singing that emphasizes beauty of sound, ... even tone, ... fine legato phrasing [and] a mastery of breath control, agility in florid passages, and ... ease in attaining high notes."<sup>2</sup> His melodies are memorable, his rhythms, catchy. *Don Pasquale*, written late in his career, is one of Donizetti's *opera buffa* masterpieces. The libretto was a text adapted by Giovanni Ruffini, earlier written by Anello Anelli. The *commedia dell'arte* style plot progresses thusly:

Ernesto, the nephew of Don Pasquale, a rich old bachelor, loves Norina, a young widow, and consequently refuses to marry the woman of his uncle's choice. Don Pasquale disinherits Ernesto and decides to take a wife himself. Ernesto's friend, Dr Malatesta, as a ruse, introduces Norina to Don Pasquale as his sister who has just returned from a convent. The old man marries her on the spot, unaware that the ceremony is a fake. Norina, who until then has appeared all sweetness and innocence, suddenly plays the extravagant hussy, and Don Pasquale soon demands a divorce. Now Dr Malatesta confesses his plot, and Don Pasquale, happy to regain his freedom, unites Ernesto and Norina.<sup>3</sup>

"So anch'io la virtu magica... Quel guardo il cavaliere" occurs at the beginning of Act I, Scene 2, functioning as the introduction to Norina. She is reading a romance novel and laughing at its absurdity. "Obviously one of the characters in the story is a very seductive young woman irresistible to men. Interrupting her reading Norina takes advantage of the

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Ann Smart and Julian Budden. "Donizetti, Gaetano," In *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51832>

<sup>2</sup> The Harvard Dictionary of Music. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003. s.v. "[Bel canto \[It., beautiful singing\]](http://www.credoreference.com/entry/harvdictmusic/bel_canto_it_beautiful_singing)," [http://www.credoreference.com/entry/harvdictmusic/bel\\_canto\\_it\\_beautiful\\_singing](http://www.credoreference.com/entry/harvdictmusic/bel_canto_it_beautiful_singing)

<sup>3</sup> Quaintance Eaton, *Opera Production: A Handbook*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) 1961.

opportunity to compare her own abilities with those of the talented woman in the book.”<sup>4</sup>

Donizetti’s arias often follow a form of *cantabile* followed by a *caballeta*. Listen for the opening *cantabile*, “an expressive, melodious, slow movement,” “Quel guardo il cavaliere,” as Norina provides a farcical reading of a passage from the ridiculous novel. Donizetti often employed a “false start” effect - he introduces an aria by allowing the orchestra to play one or two phrases before the singer begins. Grout describes this device, also used by Bellini, as a “seductive appeal for the audience’s attention.” Following the opening, which erupts in a string of delighted laughter from Norina, listen for the false start which bridges the *cantabile* to the *cabaletta*, “a fiery allegro with virtuosic vocal effects and a climactic close,” called “So anch’io la virtu magica.” The end of each verse brings increasingly lengthy virtuosic passages, showcasing Norina’s bubbly, witty personality.

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<sup>4</sup> Martial (Eta) Singher, *An Interpretive Guide to Operatic Arias*, (University Park: Penn State University Press) 2003, 29.

*Quel guardo il cavaliero,  
in mezzo al cor trafisse,  
piego'il ginocchio e disse, "Son vostro  
cavaliero!" E tanto era in quel guardo  
sapor di paradiso,  
che'il cavalier Ricardo, tutto d'amor  
conquiso, giuro, che'ad altra mai  
non volgerria'il pensier. Ha! Ha!*

*So anch'io la virtu magica  
d'un guardo tempo e loco  
So anch'io come si bruciano i cori'a lento  
foco  
D'un breve sorisetto  
conosco anch'io l'effetto  
D'un menzagnero l'agrima  
d'un subito languor.  
Conosco e mille modi,  
dell'amoroso frodi  
i vezzi l'arti facili per adescare un cor.  
D'un breve sorisetto conosco anch'io  
l'effetto,  
Conosco, conosco, d'un subito languor.  
So anch'io la virtu magica  
per ispirare amor, conosco l'effetto,  
Ah! Ah, si! Per ispirare amor.  
Ho testa bizzarra son pronta vivace  
Brillare mi piace, mi piace scherzar.  
Se monto in furore di rado sto'al segno.  
Ma in riso lo sdegno fo presto cangiar.  
Ho testa bizzarra, ma cor eccellente.*

"That look stabbed the cavalier  
in the very center of his heart.  
He bent his knee and said: "I am your  
cavalier!" And there was in that look such  
a taste of paradise  
That the cavalier Ricardo, totally  
conquered by love, swore that never  
would he turn his thoughts to another. Ha!

I, too, know the magical power  
of a look at the right time and place,  
I, too, know how to set hearts aflame on  
slow fire,  
of a passing smile,  
I, too know the effect,  
of a faked tear,  
of sudden faintness.  
I know the thousand ways  
of amorous swindles,  
the charms and easy tricks to trap a heart.  
of a passing smile, I, too know the effect,  
I know, I know, the effect of sudden  
faintness.  
I, too, know the magical power  
of inspiring love, I know the effect,  
ah yes! of inspiring love.  
I have a crazy head, I am quick and lively.  
I love to shine, I love to have fun.  
If I get furious, I rarely stay that way,  
but to laughter I soon change the anger.  
I have a crazy head, but an excellent heart.

See footnote for translation credits.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Martial (Eta) Singher, *An Interpretive Guide to Operatic Arias*, (University Park: Penn State University Press) 2003, 29.

## CHAPTER 2

Hugo Wolf  
1860-1903

Selections from *Spanisches Liederbuch* (1891)  
“In dem Schatten Meiner Locken”  
“Bedeckt mich mit Blumen”  
“Mögen alle bösen Zungen”

Hugo Wolf, a post-Wagnerian composer native of Austria-Hungary, is known mostly for his 245 published *lieder*. Wolf’s father began teaching him piano and violin when Hugo was just four years old, setting him on a track of conservatories and boarding schools (and subsequent expulsions from them due to his sometimes incorrigible nature).<sup>6</sup> Wolf’s education exposed him to the works of Mozart, Beethoven, and Haydn, as well as afforded him a childhood friendship with Gustav Mahler. A dedicated admirer of Wagner, Wolf once approached the famed composer in a hotel in Vienna in 1875. Although Wagner refused to examine Hugo’s compositions in close detail, he advised the young musician patience and practice.<sup>7</sup> Encounters with other composers of the time such as Brahms and Liszt were equally influential on Wolf’s career and led him to forays in larger compositions, tone poems, and even a short career in music criticism.<sup>8</sup> Wolf, with a story oddly similar to the Romantic composer Franz Schubert, died just before his 43rd

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<sup>6</sup> Eric Sams and Susan Youens, "Wolf, Hugo." In *Grove Music Online*. 2007-2011. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/52073pg10>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

birthday of syphilis in an insane asylum. He composed only one opera, *Der Corregidor*, which was largely unsuccessful.<sup>9</sup>

Wolf's talent for setting the German language has been hailed as unmatched by any other German art song composer. His taste for poetry and his ability to flawlessly portray the text with a palette of dissonance and chromaticism, all the while retaining a tonal center, has set him apart from other composers as the master of the pinnacle of art song.<sup>10</sup> "Chromaticism is a basic element of Wolf's musical vocabulary. He uses it as embellishment to his melodic lines and as part of his functional harmonic scheme. Augmented thirds... and augmented fourths... are also regular features of Wolf's songs and are more prevalent in moments of great intensity."<sup>11</sup> Wolf's compositions are generally through-composed. He wrote no song cycles; however, all of his songs are included in song collections centered around specific poets or sets of poetry. Some of his most notable collections are his *Möricke-lieder*, *Goethe-lieder*, *Spanisches Liederbuch*, and *Italienisches Liederbuch*.

Wolf began his composition of the *Spanisches Liederbuch* in 1889. The collection consists of ten sacred and thirty-four secular translations of 16th and 17th-century Spanish poetry that were translated into German by Paul Heyse and Emanuel Geibel. The authors of only seventeen of the texts are known and include Lope de Vega, Miguel de Cervantes, and Maria Doceo.<sup>12</sup> There are a few Spanish motives, but overall the songs are

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<sup>9</sup> Roger Dettmer, "About: Hugo Wolf." *Classical Archives*. 2008. <http://www.classicalarchives.com/composer/3566.html#tvf=tracks&tv=about>

<sup>10</sup> Leslie Gorrell, *The Nineteenth-Century German Lied* (New Jersey: Amadeus Press, 2005), 290-294.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 294.

<sup>12</sup> All Music Guide, "Hugo Wolf: Spanisches Liederbuch." *Classical Archives*. 2008. <http://www.classicalarchives.com/work/30862.html#tvf=tracks&tv=about>

highly German in character.<sup>13</sup> They are notably complex, and demonstrate the highly developed style of Wolf's later years in composition:

Wolf had reached a level of compositional maturity that enabled him to work from the underlying ideas in the poems instead of responding to details in them. Thus, we find a greater use of recurrent rhythmic motives and accompaniment figures than in earlier works, and a more vivid use of harmony to convey the overall sense of a poem.<sup>14</sup>

The collection opens with ten sacred songs including “Nun wandre Maria” (“Journey On, Mary”) and “Auf dem grünen Balkon” (From her green balcony). This passionate religious set is mostly focused on Jesus's family and establishes such motives as octave doubling and concentrated dissonance, ideas that will be used throughout the collection.<sup>15</sup> The much larger secular portion of the set maintains a theme of human love (in contrast to holy love in the sacred set), with underlying themes of eroticism. This is particularly notable in “In dem Schatten meiner Locken,” perhaps the most well-known of the entire collection.

### “In dem Schatten meiner Locken”

“In dem Schatten meiner Locken” (“In the Shadows of my Tresses”) provides a peek into the life of a young woman whose lover sleeps in the shadow of her long curls. As he sleeps, she wonders whether she should wake him, eventually deciding against it. Meanwhile, she laments the constant disarray of her curls - it seems that as soon as she brushes her hair, it becomes disheveled again. Gorrell points out that dance rhythms and the “feel of castanets” is employed in this song, illustrating the Spanish nature of the text.

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<sup>13</sup> Gorrell, 298.

<sup>14</sup> All Music Guide.

<sup>15</sup> Gorell, 298-299.

As is characteristic of many Wolf lieder, the accompaniment and the vocal line operate almost entirely independently, yet weave together in a manner as to create both atmosphere and specific moments. The motives include a repeated 8th-note and 16th-note rhythmic idea, as well as an ascending line in the accompaniment that seems to pose a question. The song progresses in self-battle as the girl continues to decide whether she should wake him. The final measures ask the question one last time, then finish with what seems like a contented answer: “Ach, nein!” although not sung, only played.

*In dem Schatten meiner Locken  
Schief mir mein Geleibter ein.  
Weck ich ihn nun auf? Ach, nein!*

In the shadow of my tresses  
My beloved has fallen asleep.  
Shall I awaken him now? Ah, no!

*Sorglich strahlt ich meine krausen Locken  
täglich in der Frühe,  
Doch umsoust ist meine Mühe,  
weil die Winde sie zerzausen.*

Carefully I comb my ruffled locks  
early every day,  
yet for nothing is my trouble,  
for the wind makes them disheveled!

*Lockenschatten, Windessausen,  
Schlieferten den Liebsten ein.  
Weck ich ihn nun auf?  
Ach, nein!*

The shadows of my tresses, the  
whispering of the wind, have lulled my  
beloved to sleep. Shall I awaken him now?  
Ah, no!

*Hören muß ich, wie ihn gräme,  
Daß er schmachtet schon so lange,  
Daß ihm Leben geb' und nehme  
Diese meine braune Wange.*

I must listen to him complain  
That he pines for me so long,  
that life is given and taken away from  
him, by this, by brown cheek.

*Und er nennt mich eine Schlange,  
Und doch schlief er bei mir ein.  
Weck ich ihn nun auf? Ach, nein!*

And he calls me a serpent,  
yet he fell asleep by me.  
Shall I awaken him now? Ah, no!

See footnote for translation credits.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Emily Ezust, “In dem Schatten Meiner Locken.” The Lied, Art Song, and Choral Texts Page. 2011.  
[http://recmusic.org/lieder/get\\_text.html?TextId=8015](http://recmusic.org/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=8015)

### “Bedeckt mich mit Blumen”

“Bedeckt mich mit Blumen” has a text attributed to Maria Doceo. The poet requests that her grave be covered with jasmine and lilies as she dies of love. It is a quiet, languid meditation on the similarity of love and the scent of flowers. This piece has three separate voices: the top line in the accompaniment carries the primary melody; the pulsing chords that alternately hesitate and persist under the melody; and finally, and perhaps subordinately, the vocal line. The song has an ebb and flow that portrays an alternation in the poet melting with love, and then a build of intensity as she becomes increasingly caught up in her feelings, only to return to a peaceful moment within herself.

*Bedeckt mich mit Blumen,  
Ich sterbe vor Liebe.  
Daß die Luft mit leisem Wehen  
nicht den süßen Duft mir entführe,  
Bedeckt mich!*

Cover me with flowers,  
I die for love.  
That the breeze with its gentle wafting  
not carry the sweetest smell away,  
cover me!

*Ist ja alles doch dasselbe,  
Liebesodem oder Düfte von Blumen.  
Von Jasmin und weisen Lilien  
Sollt ihr hier mein Grab bereiten,  
Ich sterbe.*

Yet truly it is all the same,  
breath of love or scent of flowers.  
With jasmine and white lilies  
shall you here prepare my grave,  
I die.

*Und befragt ihn mich: Woran?  
Sag' ich: Unter süßen Qualen vor Liebe.*

And if you ask me, Why?  
I say: From sweet torments of love.

See footnote for translation credits.<sup>17</sup>

### “Mögen alle bösen Zungen”

“Mögen alle bösen Zungen,” or “Let all evil tongues,” is one of the many texts in *Spanisches Liederbuch* with an unknown author. Gorrell describes the song concisely:

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<sup>17</sup> Emily Ezust, “Bedeckt mich mit Blumen.” The Lied, Art Song, and Choral Texts Page. 2011. [http://recmusic.org/lieder/get\\_text.html?TextId=18378](http://recmusic.org/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=18378)



“In ‘Mögen alle bösen Zungen,’ ...Wolf uses a lighthearted musical theme to portray the carefree girl of the song who refuses to bow to the wicked gossips around her. A staccato melody and a ‘clucking’ figure represent the wagging tongues of the gossips in this charming and very tightly organized song.”<sup>18</sup>

The sixteenth-note motive, along with the chromaticism that is so characteristic of Wolf, aptly illustrate the lightheartedness of the song. There is also a precocious, repeated syncopation motive that results from a tied eighth note over a bar line to a following sixteenth note. The accompaniment seems to fly along, mimicking the chattery gossip. The singer always obliges for a few measures, but then pulls into her own tempo and tonality, proving resistance and strength. There is a double-rhyme scheme in each verse (see lyrics and translation below). There is no easily definable form of the song, as the piece is through-composed, but the line that returns after each new idea and at the end of each strophe is always “wer mich liebt den lieb’ ich wieder, und ich lieb’, und bin geliebt” (“whoever loves me I love back, and I love and am loved”).

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<sup>18</sup> Gorrell, 300.

*Mögen alle bösen Zungen  
immer sprechen, was beliebt:  
wer mich liebt, den lieb' ich wieder,  
und ich lieb' und bin geliebt.*

Let all evil tongues  
always say what they like:  
whoever loves me I love back,  
and I love and am loved.

*Schlimme, schlimme Reden flüstern  
eure Zungen schonungslos,  
doch ich weiss es, sie sind lüstern  
nach unschuld'gem Blute blos.*

Wicked, wicked rumor  
your tongues whisper mercilessly,  
but I know they are merely  
hungry for innocent blood.

*Nimmer soll es mich bekümmern,  
schwätzt so viel es euch beliebt;  
wer mich liebt, den lieb' ich wieder,  
und ich lieb' und bin geliebt.*

Never shall it worry me,  
gossip as much as you want;  
whoever loves me I love back  
and I love and am loved.

*Zur Verleumdun sich verstehtet nur,  
wem Lieb' und Gunst gebrach,  
weil's ihm selber elend gehet  
und ihn niemand minnt und mag.*

Slandering is the only thing that's understood  
by the one who has missed out on love  
since he himself is so wretched and no one  
woos and wants him.

*Darum denk' ich, das die Liebe,  
drum sie schmähn, mir Ehre giebt;  
wer mich liebt, den lieb' ich wieder,  
und ich lieb' und bin geliebt.*

That's why I think that love,  
which they revile, gives me honor;  
whoever loves me I love back  
and I love and am loved.

*Wenn ich wär' aus Stein und Eisen,  
möchtet ihr darauf bestahn,  
das ich sollte von mir weisen,  
Leibesgrus und Liebesflehen.*

If I were made of stone and iron,  
you might insist  
that I should reject  
lover's greeting and lover's plea.

*Doch mein Herzlein ist nun  
leider weich,  
wie's Gott uns Mädchen giebt,  
wer mich liebt, den lieb' ich wieder,  
und ich lieb' und bin geliebt.*

But my little heart is now  
unfortunately tender,  
as God grants us maidens;  
whoever loves me I love back;  
and I love and am loved.

See footnote for translation credits.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Emily Ezust, "Mögen alle bösen Zungen." The Lied, Art Song, and Choral Texts Page. 2011. [http://recmusic.org/lieder/get\\_text.html?TextId=18378](http://recmusic.org/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=18378)

## CHAPTER 3

Jean Berger  
1909-2002

*Quatre Chants d'Amour* (1937)  
“C’est fait, il n’en faut plus parler”  
“Qui nombre à”  
“Blanche comm’lys”  
“Vivons, mignarde!”

Jean Berger was a German-American composer, far more renowned for his choral compositions than his solo works. He wrote 109 songs in six languages, choosing varied poems based on his personal nomadic and exotic life experiences.

Born in Germany in 1909, Berger was the son of Orthodox Jews who moved the family to Alsace-Lorraine (at the time occupied by Germany until the end of World War I) in 1911. The Berger children became French citizens in 1918 when the French government reacquired Lorraine. Berger’s music studies began at the age of nine with piano first, and later, flute and viola. He began studying music formally in 1927 in Heidelberg, Germany, and began a conducting career in 1932 at the Darmstadt opera. Soon after the appointment began, however, Berger was “brutally [thrown out] during a rehearsal [by the German police.]”<sup>20</sup> His family was forced to leave Germany, and while they immigrated to Jerusalem, Berger moved to Paris. He remained there until 1939, when once again, his Jewish status during Nazi occupation forced him to leave France. Berger got a job performing with a nightclub singer, touring to Rio de Janeiro and remaining there until 1941 when he moved to New York. He was drafted into the US Army in 1942, where he worked as a translator and producer of foreign language

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<sup>20</sup> Merrie Melanie Smith, “Jean Berger: His life and musical compositions for the solo voice -- a performance project” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2001), 3.

broadcasts and USO camp shows.<sup>21</sup> Post-World War II, Berger was employed as an arranger for NBC and CBS and remained there until 1948, also working as a concert accompanist. His career in education began in 1948 and took him to Middlebury College as a professor, and later to the University of Illinois - Urbana, the University of Colorado - Boulder, and Colorado Women's College - Denver. He retired in 1971 and remained active as a composer, performer, and scholar until his death in 2002.<sup>22</sup>

Berger's compositions often reflect the French and German cultures and folk song, but he never composed a song in German, his native tongue. His love for literature is reflected as a textual focus in most of his compositions. Berger's songs tend to be set syllabically and are melodically focused, with the accompaniment utilizing the whole of the piano. The keyboard parts are usually intended to be atmospheric, and seek balance with the voice as opposed to one or the other being the dominant.<sup>23</sup>

The 1937 set *Quatre Chants d'Amour* features poems from 14th-, 15th-, and 16th-century French poets. It was one of Jean Berger's earliest compositions, perhaps his second song cycle. He composed the set while living in Paris shortly after fleeing Germany. Just after publication, however, the publishing company closed and resigned the copyright to Berger. The following letter from Jean Berger explains the genesis of *Quatre Chants d'Amour*:

...this set was written when a Paris soprano asked me to accompany her in her impending recital, and while we were discussing the potential program, she asked whether I might not have a score which could be of interest. In our world of young would-be composers the answer to such a question would always be, "Not today, but

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 6

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 7

for sure next week,” although politeness demanded that the answer be thought but not uttered. But indeed, the following week the score was done and premiered by Marie Blanc-Audra in her recital at the Salle Chopin, with much success.<sup>24</sup>

The texts are obviously intended for a male singer, but Berger has implied that he composed them for either tenor or soprano. The set features “lush harmonies, shifting meters, and engaging accompaniments.”<sup>25</sup>

“C’est fait, il n’en faut plus parler”

“C’est fait, il n’en faut plus parler,” (“It is done, let no more be said”) the first of the four love songs, is a setting of a poem by Charles, Duke d’Orleans (1394-1465). Charles d’Orleans’s significance as a 15th-century poet lies not only in the beauty and depth of his prose, but of the situation in which he wrote. D’Orleans was a duke, who was captured at Agincourt in 1415 and spent twenty-five years in captivity under the English. It was during his captivity that the bulk of his poems were composed. His poems during this period are mostly *ballades*, “project[ing] a new awareness of the passage of time as a source of regret and sadness.”<sup>26</sup> His melancholy is quite apparent in this poem titled “Chanson XXII” in d’Orleans’s collections. The last line of Berger’s setting of the poem was an addition by the composer - the original poem ended with, “C’est fait, il n’en faut plus parler” (“It is done, let no more be said”).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>26</sup> David Coward, *A History of French Literature: From Chanson de geste to Cinema*, (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2008) 27-28.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, 68.

The song features a melody in the accompaniment which opens the piece, cascading into a new voice in the vocal line. The form is a modified rondo, always returning to the opening passage. The song utilizes mostly nonharmonic tones, typically a whole step where a half step should be in a diatonic key (a motive that will persist throughout the set) and dissonance between the piano and the voice.

*C'est fait, il n'en faut plus parler  
Mon coeur s'est de moi départi.  
Pour tenir l'amoureux parti,  
il m'a voulu abandonner.  
Rien, ne vaut m'en déconforter  
Ni d'être dolent ou marri.  
C'est fait, il n'en faut plus parler,  
mon coeur s'est de moi départi.  
De moi ne se fait que moquer,  
Quand piteusement je lui dis,  
Que je ne puis vivre sans lui,  
A peine me veut écouter.  
C'est fait, il n'en faut plus parler,  
Mon coeur s'est de moi départir.*

'Tis done, let no more be said  
My true love has deserted me.  
He has left,  
He chose to abandon me.  
It is useless to comfort me,  
Or to be tearful or desperate.  
'Tis done, let no more be said,  
My true love has deserted me.  
There is nothing left but mockery,  
and when I sorrowfully mention  
that without him I cannot live,  
I am barely listened to.  
'Tis done, let no more be said  
My true love has deserted me.

Translation taken from music.

### “Qui nombre à”

“Qui nombre a” (“He who, at the hour”) is set to a poem by a French poet named Joachim du Bellay (1522-1560). The poem is from his collection of love sonnets entitled *L'Olive*. It boasts historical value in that it was the first collection of love sonnets ever written in the French language. Some of the poems in this set have been assumed to be plagiarized:

Many of these poems were borrowed from classical writers such as Horace or Virgil, while others were entirely of his own design. The poems speak of the dual nature of love as expressed by the classical poet Petrarch. This particular volume of Du Bellay's works is believed to be in honor of a certain lady, whom he describes as a lovely

golden-haired woman. However, the historical identity of this object of his sonnets is entirely open to speculation, and many scholars believe her to be an invention of Du Bellay's. In 1550, Du Bellay appended the book, adding thirteen new odes, with such themes as the fickle nature of fortune and pastoral scenes of springtime.<sup>28</sup>

Berger's setting of the poem is very melodic, featuring exotic-sounding chords and leading tones. The final section is the most expressive, concluding with earlier motives repeated only on "ah," as if words can no longer describe the torment of love.

*Qui nombre à quand l'astre  
qui plus luit ja le milieu  
du bas cercle environne  
Tous ces beaux feux qui font une  
couronne  
Aux noirs cheveux de la plus claire nuit,  
Et qui a su combien de fleurs produit  
le vert printemps,  
Et combien de fruits l'automne,  
Et les trésors que  
l'Inde riche donne au marinier  
qu'avarice conduit  
Qui a compté les étincelles vives  
D'Aetne ou Vesuve  
et les flots qui en mer  
heurtent le front des écumeuses rives,  
Celui encor d'une qui tout excelle,  
Peut les vertus et beautés estimer,  
Et les tourments,  
Les tourments que j'ai pour l'amour  
d'elle.*

He who, at the hour when the sun  
is half-hidden  
by the horizon,  
has counted its beauteous rays that weave a  
crown  
upon the dark hair of the clearest night,  
And he who has learned how many flowers  
the green spring time produces,  
and how many fruits the autumn,  
And he who knows the treasures  
that rich India bestows upon a sailor  
bent upon finding new worlds  
He who has counted the live sparks  
of Etna and Vesuvius,  
and the waves of the ocean  
that break upon the foam-covered beaches  
Only he can have an idea of the virtues and  
beauty of the one who excels all  
And of the torments,  
The torments I suffer because of my love  
for her.

Translation taken from music.

### "Blanche Comm' Lys"

"Blanche Comm' Lys" ("White as the lily") has a text by the well-known poet Guillaume de Machaut." Guillaume was secretary to Jean de Luxembourg, son of

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<sup>28</sup> "Bellay, Joachim Du - Introduction," *Literary Criticism (1400-1800)*, (Michigan: Gale Cengage) 2003. <http://www.enotes.com/literary-criticism/bellay-joachim-du>

Emperor Henry VII, for three decades. After the death of his master in battle, Guillaume resided with his own daughter who was the wife of the Duke of Normandy. Following her death, he continued to write in retirement under the care of his son-in-law. The Oxford Treasury accolades Guillaume's poetic influences as follows: "Guillaume contributed largely to the establishment of the vogue of the poems with fixed forms. He enjoyed a great reputation during his lifetime, but it died with him. The fame of his poems would seem to have benefited by his ... original talent as a musician."<sup>29</sup>

"Blanche comm'lys" is entitled "Rondo" by the poet. This is due to the repetitive nature of the first line in the middle of the poem and then the repetition of the first two lines again at the end of the poem. This is an ideal poetic form for a song because it provides a refrain to which one can return, and it also allows a verse setting between the refrains. Berger's setting relies almost entirely on seventh chords without the fifth. In other words, the accompaniment doubles the voice part completely, but with a seventh chord built on top, without the fifth of the chord. Occasionally, the bass line in the piano will fill in the fifth. The vocal melody is as repetitive as the text with only a few variations. Berger had this to say about his harmonic choices in this song:

...I had been acquainted, by telephone, with Reynaldo Hahn, whose name you may know ("L'heure exquise, et al). He did receive me in his hotel, looked at the score, and when he reached "Blanche comm'lys," he turned to me, pointed at the unresolved seventh chords in succession and said: 'You young people write such dissonant stuff that I just can't understand, or judge it.' Dissonant!!! What does one do in such a case? I chose to follow my own ears, and have done that ever since.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Albert G. Latham, *The Oxford Treasury of French Literature, Vol. I: Medieval, Renaissance, and Seventeenth Century*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915) 146-147.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, 68.



*Blanche comm' lys  
plus que rose vermeille,  
resplendissant comm' rubis d'Orient.  
En remirant vos beautés non pareilles,  
Blanche comm' lys  
plus que rose vermeille,  
Suis si ravi que  
mon coeur toudis veille,  
afin que serve a la loi de fin amant.*

White as the lily,  
more vermillion than the rose,  
Resplendent as a ruby from the Orient,  
when I behold your unexcelled beauty,  
White as the lily,  
more vermillion than the rose,  
I am so entranced that  
my heart beats unceasingly,  
So as to make me the perfect lover.

Translation taken from music.

### “Vivons, mignarde”

The last poem of the set, “Vivons, mignarde” (“Let Us Live, My Sweet”) is by Jean Antoine de Baif (1532-1589). Jean Antoine was the illegitimate son of the French diplomat and scholar, Lazare de Baif.<sup>31</sup> In 1547, Jean Antoine became the principal of the Collège de Coquerat, joining fellow poets Joachim du Bellay and Ronsard. The three together formed a literary society called the Brigade, later known as the Pléiade. “Scholarly, inventive, innovative and eclectic, Jean Antoine aspired to revive traditional rhythms, thanks to a musical contribution due to a græco-latin metre, thus reforming and playing with the *orthography* while being based on phonetics...”<sup>32</sup>

Berger’s composition can be analyzed in three parts: the primary melody of the vocal line; the primary melody and interludes of the treble piano part; and the secondary piano accompaniment, also in the treble staff. The overall form of the piece may be analyzed as A A<sup>1</sup> A<sup>2</sup>, with the only significant changes between the verses being key and/or extended

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<sup>31</sup> Chris Whent, “Jean Antoine de Baif,” *Here on a Sunday Morning*, 2010. <http://www.hoasm.org/IVI/Baif.html>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

or differentiated endings. It is essentially a modified strophic song, the key changes being the most obvious feature. It modulates from D major to its dominant, A major, and then back again. The vocal line, as well as the secondary accompaniment part, basically arpeggiates and outlines these keys. The vocal line also tends to mimic the secondary, beginning a phrase as the accompaniment ends one. This mimicry trend persists throughout the song, as well as a related rhythmic motif: Berger also plays with the downbeat as the beginning of a phrase as opposed to the pickup.

*Vivons mignarde, vivons  
Et suivons les ébats qu'Amour nous donne,  
Sans que de vieux rechignes renfroignes  
le sot babil nous etonne.  
Les jours qui viennent et vont se refont,  
le soleil mort se releve,  
mais une trop longue nuit las! nous suit  
apres une clarté breve.  
Tandis que nous la voyons,  
Employons ce doux vivre ô ma Meline  
Ca donc, mignonne, viens t'en  
Et me tends ta bouchette coraline.*

Let us live, my sweet,  
and accept the joys of love,  
without listening to the foolish prattlings  
of the shriveled, wizened oldsters.  
The days, though they come and go,  
always start anew. The sun rises again,  
But alas, an endlessly long night will  
follow after our brief spell of brightness.  
So then, while we see it,  
Let us live life to the full, my love,  
Come here, my sweet,  
and give me your coral lips.

Translation taken from music.

## CHAPTER 4

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
1756-1791

“Una donna a quindici anni”  
from *Così fan Tutte* (1790)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart proved himself a musical genius as early as his fifth birthday. A clear prodigy, he began his first compositions at this age, as well as a demonstrated talent on harpsichord, keyboard, violin, and organ. By the age of six, Mozart was touring and performing for European royalty. At thirteen he was an internationally known composer in multiple genres. At the time of his early death in 1791 (he was just 35), he had composed over 600 works spanning symphonies, concertos, operas, cantatas, and beyond. He has been hailed as “the most universal composer in the history of Western music.”<sup>33</sup>

Mozart composed his first opera in 1766, *Apollo et Hyancithus*, and in 1767, the singspiel *Bastien und Bastienne*. The 1780s, however, were the years of his best known operas: *Idomeneo*, *Der Schauspieldirektor*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan Tutte*, while his last years brought *Clemenza di Tito* and *Die Zauberflöte*.

*Così fan tutte*, literally meaning “Thus do all women,” has a libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte (also the librettist for the other great Mozart operas including *Don Giovanni* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*). Da Ponte took the title from a line in Act I, Scene vii of *Le Nozze di Figaro*. The original idea that Emperor Joseph II commissioned this opera has been disproved in recent years. Although the libretto has often been criticized as problematic

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<sup>33</sup> Cliff Eisen, et al. "Mozart." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40258pg3>

and “flimsy,” the music has been celebrated as deeply complex.<sup>34</sup> The opera is considered to be the epitome of the 18th century genre *opera buffa*, with a plot that is not altogether inconceivable: “Dorabella and Fiordiligi are respectively engaged to lovers Ferrando and Guglielmo, who pretend to leave for war but instead return, disguised, and prove their mistresses’ infidelities by each seducing the other’s fiancées.”<sup>35</sup> Upon its premiere, audiences disapproved of the immoral situations around which the plot revolves. This was mostly due to the believability of the story, and they found it distasteful and shocking. Because of the poor reception of the opera, and the death of Emperor Joseph II just five days after its premiere, *Così fan tutte* all but disappeared from the European stage until 1910.<sup>36</sup> It has since been revived as a commonly performed and well-loved opera in many houses worldwide.

“Una donna a quindici anni” is Despina’s aria in Act II, Scene i. Despina, the maid, is encouraging her mistresses to enjoy the adventure of their fiances’ absence and take opportunities with the “Albanians” - Ferrando and Guglielmo in disguise. She explains that a girl of fifteen years should know how to command men, how to manipulate and flirt, and that it is the woman who is in charge - or must take charge - of amorous exchanges.

Despina’s aria is a classic example of Mozart’s elevation of the lower class above nobility. Similar to the Susanna-Countess relationship in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Despina’s

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<sup>34</sup> All Music Guide, “About: Così fan tutte.” Classical Archives. 2008. <http://www.classicalarchives.com/work/19438.html#tvf=tracks&tv=about>

<sup>35</sup> Burton D. Fisher, *Mozart’s Così fan tutte: Opera Classics Library Series*. (Boca Raton: Opera Journeys Publishing, 2004), 14.

<sup>36</sup> All Music Guide.

role in her relationship to Dorabella and Fiordiligi is one of superiority and advisement. In “Una donna a quindici anni” she displays her wit and confidence in a way that implies her status to be the sovereign. In her cataloguing of the powers a woman must have, Despina seems to be touting her own - not only over men, but over the women to whom she is speaking. She realizes her position of authority and is indeed able to manipulate them to her will through the methods she is teaching. The small ornamentations throughout may mimic laughter at one point or simply be a manifestation of her self-confidence at another. The false ending is indicative of her “I can and I will” nature (from the lyrics) as she manages to get in one last word.

*Una donna a quindici anni  
 dée saper ogni gran moda  
 Dove' il diavolo a la coda.  
 cosa é bene, e mal cose,  
 Dée saper le malizette  
 Che' innamorano gli amanti.  
 Finger riso, finger pianti,  
 inventar i bei perchei.  
 Dee' in un momento dar retta cento,  
 Colle pupille parlar con mille,  
 Dar speme a tutti, sien belli' o brutti,  
 Saper nascondersi, senza confondersi,  
 Senza rosire, saper mentire.  
 Equal regina dall'alto soglio  
 col posso! e voglio! farsi ubbidir.  
 (Par ch'abbian gusto di tal dottrina:  
 Viva Despina, che sa servir, che sa  
 servir!)*

A woman of fifteen years  
 Must know all the good methods  
 where the devil keeps his tail.  
 What's good, and what's bad,  
 She must know the little malices  
 That enamor lovers.  
 To feign laughter, to feign tears,  
 And invent good reasons.  
 She must pay attention to a hundred at a time,  
 Speak with her eyes with a thousand,  
 Give hope to all, be they handsome or ugly,  
 Know how to obfuscate without getting  
 confused, Know how to lie without blushing.  
 And this queen from her high throne  
 Can make them obey with, “I can,” and “I  
 will.” (It seems they like this doctrine:  
 Long live Despina, who knows how to serve!)

Translation taken from the music.

John Kander  
b. 1927

*A Letter from Sullivan Ballou (1993)*

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, John Kander is known mostly for his works for the musical theater stage. Kander was a protégée of composer Douglas Moore at Columbia University where he earned a Masters Degree. Kander is also half of the famous composer/lyricist team Kander and (Fred) Ebb, the talent behind such musicals as *Cabaret*, *Chicago*, *Fosse*, *The Kiss of the Spider Woman*, and *Steel Pier*. Although the first two of these were the most successful and renowned of their major works, Kander and Ebb have won multiple Tony Awards, Grammys, Emmys, and received nominations for countless others. The team was so influential on theater that, following Fred Ebb's death in 2004, the New York Times stated that "the dissolution of the team was more than the end of an era. It was the end of a touchstone relationship, far worse than the breakup of the Beatles or Bennifer."<sup>37</sup> They were responsible for such masterpieces as "All That Jazz," "New York, New York," and "(Life is a) Cabaret." Defining an exclusive style of either composer, or the two as a team, would be a disservice - they have been celebrated as extremely versatile composers whose musicals take on their own lives individually.

"A Letter from Sullivan Ballou" is a standalone composition commissioned by the Richard Tucker Foundation and premiered at Avery Fisher Hall in 1993. The piece, contrary to the majority of Kander's work, is entirely un-theatrical in nature. Sullivan Ballou was a Rhode Island lawyer who immediately dedicated himself to the military in 1861 when the Civil War began. He was married to Sarah Hart Shumway, and together they had two sons, Edgar and William. Ballou wrote the letter just one week before his

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<sup>37</sup> Jesse Green. "Kander without Ebb? Start spreading the news," New York Times. 2006. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/27/theater/27gree.html>

death. Ironically, Ballou never mailed the letter - it was retrieved from his personal effects after his death.<sup>38</sup> This letter was made famous by a 1990 Civil War documentary in which Ken Burns poignantly read the text over scrolling images of soldiers. Renee Fleming premiered Kander's piece just three years later.

"A Letter from Sullivan Ballou" begins as spoken text with the opening of the letter:

My very dear Sarah:  
The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days --  
perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write again, I feel  
impelled to write a few lines that may fall upon your eye  
when I am no more.

As the reading comes to a close, the piano begins a very simple one-measure motive that will persist for twenty-one measures as the singer continues the letter, now sung. The vocal line is entirely independent from the accompaniment for this opening section. The almost robotic idea in the piano part provides a feeling of the ticking of time, of a tension in waiting. It also highlights the conviction of the early parts of the letter in which Sullivan Ballou attempts to assure Sarah, and perhaps himself, that he is doing what he feels is not only right, but also fighting a battle that will likely be the end of him.

The interlude after the opening section continues the motive in the left hand, while the first line of the vocal part appears in the right hand, acting as a poignant moment of reflection before the text of the letter continues. Following the interlude, the mood and texture immediately change, notated as "Quasi recitative," with only whole-note variations of a D major chord to accompany. The meter changes frequently, allowing for a very natural speech rhythm, and giving time for a gradual build in emotion and intensity. Sullivan's letter in this section addresses his love for Sarah, which he reassures

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<sup>38</sup> Ken Burns. "Historical Document: Sullivan Ballou letter," PBS. 2002. [http://www.pbs.org/civilwar/war/ballou\\_letter.html](http://www.pbs.org/civilwar/war/ballou_letter.html)

her is only equalled by his passion to serve his country. He reflects on their lives together, the accompaniment remaining simple, emphasizing the text entirely. The texture of the piano part finally starts to thicken as he ponders his regret for missing the future with his family.

A return to simplicity is required as Sullivan seems to whisper his admittance of a “small claim upon divine providence,” when suddenly the accompaniment becomes entirely ambient, twinkling as he describes the “wafted prayer of [his] little Edgar that [he] shall return to [his] loved ones unharmed.” Finally, Sullivan slowly expresses the strong chance that he may not return, but that he will always be with Sarah. Through this section, and weaving in and out until the end, the accompaniment doubles the vocal line as if Sullivan is there with Sarah as she reads the letter. The scope of the accompaniment waxes and wanes along with the nature of his text through the rest of the song. Often, one hand plays constant arpeggios while the other lingers on half or whole notes, again perhaps a mirror of Sullivan and Sarah together. Sullivan ends the letter by requesting she wait for him, for they shall meet again. The piano part continues for several more measures, and the opening of the letter is reiterated, spoken, to close the song.

My very dear Sarah:

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days—perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write again, I feel impelled to write a few lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more . . .

I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American Civilization now leans on the triumph of the Government and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and sufferings of the Revolution. And I am willing—perfectly willing—to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this Government, and to pay that debt . . .

Sarah my love for you is deathless, it seems to bind me with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break; and yet my love of Country comes over me



like a strong wind and bears me unresistibly on with all these chains to the battle field.

The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them for so long. And hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together, and seen our sons grown up to honorable manhood, around us. I have, I know, but few and small claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me—perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar, that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed. If I do not my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battle field, it will whisper your name. Forgive my many faults and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless and foolish I have often times been! How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot upon your happiness . . .

But, O Sarah! If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the gladdest days and in the darkest nights . . . always, always, and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath, as the cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by. Sarah do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again . . .

Text as edited from the music

Gian Carlo Menotti  
1911-2007

“Hello? Oh, Margaret, it’s you!” from *The Telephone*  
(1946)

Gian Carlo Menotti, Italian-born 20th century opera composer, is best known for the popular Christmas opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. His other notable works include *The Old Maid and the Thief*, *The Consul*, and *The Medium*. Menotti is also responsible for establishing The Festival of Two Worlds, an important music festival in both Spoleto, Italy and Charleston, SC, which provides a respected forum for emerging composers and performers to debut new music.

Menotti composed two operas before the age of 13, when he began attendance at the Verdi Conservatory of Music in Milan. In spite of his Italian upbringing, Menotti was a

self-described American composer - he moved to the United States at the age of 28 to attend the Curtis Institute of Music. While at Curtis, Menotti established a lifelong friendship with Samuel Barber, which they maintained until Barber's death in 1981.

Menotti's style is particularly noted for his careful awareness of the audience, and similarly, his desire to connect an audience to a piece. Menotti's music is tonal, melodic, and often repetitive with continuous recitative and short arias. His meters tend to be straightforward with light orchestration. Menotti has been hailed for his multi-talented ability to fuse music and theater - he often directed his own works, wrote his own libretti, and proved success with relatively long runs on Broadway. Menotti won two Pulitzer Prizes: one for *The Consul*, one for *The Saint of Bleeker Street*. At the time of his death in 2007, the New York times hailed him as "perhaps the most popular and prolific opera composer of his time."<sup>39</sup>

*The Telephone* is a one-act opera with only three characters: Lucy, her boyfriend Ben, and her telephone (whose role throughout is quite important). Ben is set on proposing to Lucy, but her phone continues to ring, always interrupting. Eventually he goes to a public pay phone, calls her, and proposes. "Hello? Oh Margaret, it's you!" allows the audience to hear one side of Lucy's conversation with her friend Margaret. The one-measure intro is the ringing of the phone. Throughout the aria, Lucy chatters along, with the piano interjecting as Margaret. The conversation alternates between gossip, polite inquiry, and laughter. In the laughter sections, Margaret's voice in the piano runs up and down the staff, mimicking her storytelling, and Lucy simply laughs in short virtuosic passages. It seems Lucy cannot get off the phone, until finally she says "Alright, alright goodbye!"

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<sup>39</sup> Bernard Holland, "Gian Carlo Menotti, Opera Composer, Dies at 95," New York Times. 2007. [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/02/arts/music/02menotti.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/02/arts/music/02menotti.html?_r=1)

multiple times and ends the conversation. The form of the piece is A B C A<sup>1</sup> C<sup>1</sup> B<sup>1</sup> A<sup>2</sup>, which illustrates the ever-returning intent of Lucy trying to hang up, followed by her feelings of obligatory question-asking and laughing responses.

## CHAPTER 5

Adam Guettel  
b. 1964

Selections from *The Light in the Piazza* (2005)  
“The Beauty Is”  
“The Light in the Piazza”

Adam Guettel, New York born musical theater composer, is most well-known for his Tony Award winning Broadway “crossover” musical, *The Light in the Piazza*, which premiered on Broadway in 2005 in the Vivian Beaumont Theater at Lincoln Center. He was also the composer and lyricist for *Floyd Collins*, *Love’s Fire*, and *Myths and Hymns*. Guettel is the grandson of the legendary Broadway composer Richard Rodgers and the son of composer Mary Rodgers Guettel. Informing the depth and complexity characteristic of his work, Guettel has struggled (somewhat openly) with a “licentious” lifestyle, including addiction and has been compared to his grandfather in terms of his “indiscriminate” attitude toward women.<sup>40</sup>

Guettel’s music often falls into a category of crossover music for reasons of complex orchestration, difficult vocal lines, and mostly-sung stories. His work cannot be considered opera because there are scenes with substantial dialogue, and his works are premiered in Broadway houses. However, it is also difficult to place him as a musical theater composer: his works are not song-and-dance crowd pleasers by any means. In spite of his heritage, Guettel’s compositions tend to be far more intricate than Broadway standards and the “Great American Songbook” to which his grandfather was such a large contributor. On his own style, Guettel says the following:

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<sup>40</sup> Jesse Green, “A Complicated Gift,” New York Times. 2003. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/06/magazine/a-complicated-gift.html?pagewanted=all>

As far as dissonance in my work, to me harmony is a continuum from Gregorian structure to atonal chaos. And my music obviously lands somewhere in between there and occasionally accesses either pole. To me harmony is just a way of creating emotional syntax in songwriting or in music making, or in storytelling with music. Emotional syntax for me comes through harmony. Harmony as an emotional tool, I think, is predominately a tonal thing, as far as how it effects the listener. And dissonance is another color, it's another thing that is emotionally useful. So when people call my work dissonant I think they're really just describing some section of a piece I've written where I was trying to create a certain kind of emotional syntax and those were the tools I was using.<sup>41</sup>

Guettel's musical *The Light in the Piazza* has a libretto based on the book by the same name by Elizabeth Spencer. An unusually immature twenty-six year-old girl named Clara visits Florence, Italy one summer with her mother Margaret. During the course of the plot, many secrets unravel, including the fact that Clara was kicked in the head by a pony at her birthday party when she was just a child, permanently affecting her mind and causing her to be a bit mentally beclouded. Margaret, a deep character struggling with her own marriage, is also very protective of her handicapped daughter. When Clara falls in love with an Italian boy named Fabrizio, Margaret forbids the relationship, causing much conflict and unexpected twists in the storyline.

The music has been described as Neoromantic Classical by the New York Times, teetering on the edge of opera, and contains quite a bit of Italian language. The New York Times refers to Guettel's score and instrumentation as such:

But take a look at the score of "Piazza." To create its highly chromatic, yearning atmosphere (Guettel calls it faux-Lisztian), the harpist is kept so busy changing pedals that she's basically doing a clog dance. The other instruments -- piano, violin, cello, bass -- aren't spared, either. The vocal lines are compulsively notated down to the last crotchet [eighth-note], specifying the kinds of inflections and back-phrasings

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<sup>41</sup> Ryan Defoe, "An Interview with Adam Guettel," Talkin' Broadway. 1997-2011. <http://www.talkinbroadway.com/regional/boston/boston5.html>

that other composers would leave to the singers' sense of style. It's not pedantry; it's how Guettel hears, and in some sense tries to stabilize, his damaged world.<sup>42</sup>

### “The Beauty Is”

“The Beauty Is” takes place in a Florentine museum as Clara examines a tall, naked statue, perhaps the David, and innocently stares at his groin, commenting, “These are very popular in Italy - it’s the land of naked marble boys... something you don’t see a lot in Winston Salem - that’s the land of corduroys.” The accompaniment to Clara’s line mimics her disjointed thought patterns with syncopated groupings of sixteenth notes and heavily dissonant chords. The discordant opening jaunt as she discovers the strange new world contrasts with the melodic, lyrical string part as she describes the beauty of finding familiarity in foreign circumstances. This song is a strong example of a crossover piece - the singer may not “belt” the piece - she is instead required to sing in a vocal mix (chest voice and head voice combined) until the end when a true “legit,” or classical technique is employed. Throughout the show, Clara must perform these vocal acrobatics constantly, which may reflect the conflict of her plight and the confusion in her thoughts.

The form of the piece is a modified verse-chorus as Clara examines her emotions and states without abandon that this moment is about “wanting something... this reaching for it... this is wishing that a moment would arrive... this is taking chances... this is almost touching what the beauty is.” It seems that she intuitively knows she is falling in love with a boy named Fabrizio, but is not entirely conscious of it - only that she knows something is about to change. She takes comfort in her anonymity, knowing that in many ways, Fabrizio is also “just a someone,” no more special than she, but no less. Her

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<sup>42</sup> Jesse Green, “A Complicated Gift.”

seemingly naive observations are often also oddly wise, and the poignancy of this innocent wisdom is mirrored in the contrasting musical moments of rhythmic dissonance and melodic legato.

### “The Light in the Piazza”

“The Light in the Piazza,” the title piece, is an expanded glimpse into Clara’s touching view of the world, advanced from her first discourse in “The Beauty Is.” The song occurs at the beginning of the second act. Clara’s mother, constantly trying to distract her daughter from what she feels to be an inappropriate love match, brings Clara to Rome. Clara refuses to give up on her love, even in another city. In a moment of pure frustration, Margaret slaps her daughter across the face, stunning Clara into a quiet moment of revelation and a touching explanation of her love with the title song.

The accompaniment opens, sparkling, illustrating very clearly the light in the piazza in which Clara is standing. This is the only way Clara’s mind can explain her feelings: the light in the piazza is a metaphor for falling in love with Fabrizio. This amazing feeling is overtaking her very being, and she does not know how to define it: “...it’s rushing up, it’s pouring out, it’s flying through the air! All through the air! Who knows what you call it, I don’t care!” The lavish accompaniment swells with Clara’s feeling in deceivingly and increasingly complicated rhythm and meter, building until the end, until finally, she concludes with, “The light in the piazza, my love.” It concludes with a simple, satisfying D major chord.

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